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School Reform News

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Schoolwide Programs Cheat Disadvantaged Kids

Program to close learning gap leaves children 3-4 years behind

BY STANLEY POGROW

Despite research claims of dramatic improvements among disadvantaged children who took part in a schoolwide reform program, independent examination of actual test results shows no such improvement, with disadvantaged children performing poorly and/or even worse than their peers.

Since the research was used as the basis for shifting Title I funds to schoolwide intervention programs and away from individual disadvantaged children, this represents a major misdirection of school reform efforts.

Background

Title I is the primary federal effort to reduce the learning gap and equalize opportunity by boosting the performance of disadvantaged children. Traditionally, these funds were given to schools to give additional assistance directly to low-income students.

But Congress re-targeted Title I funding after top researchers reported that a program geared to comprehensively improving the school as a whole dramatically boosted test scores for the disadvantaged.

The new legislation allowed Title I funds to be

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Stephanie Vanegas (left) is read to by Vanessa Ulloa (right) in a partner reading program at a Los Angeles charter school. In Illinois, charter schools are under attack by local school boards and the Chicago Teacher Union. *See stories on page 18. L.A. Times Photos.*

Excuses, Expectations, and Learning Gaps

Does each year in school add a year of learning?

BY GEORGE A. CLOWES

One of the most significant advances in educational assessment over the past decade has been the development of the Tennessee Value-Added Assessment System (TVAAS) and its recent application by SAS inSchool as a general diagnostic tool. The SAS system takes a school district's year-to-year assessment data and measures the performance of the school system, different schools, and individual teachers—all at a very modest cost.

The fundamental idea underlying value-added assessment, developed by Dr. William L. Sanders and his colleagues at the University of Tennessee, is that all students can improve academically each year at the same rate as all other students. In other words, regardless of current academic achievement level—and regardless of race, sex, family income, and par-

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High School Crisis: 3 in 10 Drop Out

Study casts doubt on rosy reports of graduation rates

BY ROBERT HOLLAND

More than three of every 10 U.S. students drop out of high school, thereby lessening their chances of becoming productive, economically successful citizens.

For blacks and Hispanics, the situation is even worse: Almost half do not complete high school. The national graduation rates were 55 percent for African-American students, 53 percent for Hispanics, and 57 percent for Native Americans. The highest graduation rates were 79 percent for Asians and 76 percent for whites.

Those are the key findings of the second annual report, "Public School Graduation Rates in the United States," by the Manhattan Institute for Policy Research, an independent think tank.

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New Congress Sets Priorities

BY DON SOIFER

Special education, Head Start, and higher education programs will be among the top education priorities when the 108th Congress convenes in January.

But before lawmakers turn their attention to these areas, they will first need to resolve a host of potentially thorny domestic spending issues, including several on education. Congress faces a potential showdown over spending ceilings set by the White House, having failed to advance a number of nondefense appropriations bills in the previous session, with education looming large among them. The outcome and tone of these proceedings is expected to largely set the tone for other education business.

The House and Senate education committees have already held numerous hearings on different aspects of special education, and they now aim to proceed with the business of reauthorizing the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. (See "Presidential Commission Reports on Special Education," *School Reform News*, September 2002.) With an increase in federal special education spending widely anticipated, some researchers have expressed concern that the new funding not result in an increase in the number of children erroneously labeled as disabled by school districts seeking increased revenue.

Higher Education on the Agenda

With its scheduled review of the Higher Education Act, Congress will consider the effect rising college costs have on access to postsecondary education. This is expected to lead to an examination of student financial assistance programs and a discussion of possible reforms. The proceedings will likely provide lawmakers with an opportunity to consider changes addressing teacher preparation and certification as well.

A Head Start in Literacy?

Head Start also is scheduled for reauthorization in 2003. House and Senate Education Committee leaders have expressed an interest in strengthening the academic aspects of the program, with an emphasis on results similar to the orientation that forms the basis for the No Child Left Behind Act.

Dr. Wade Horn, Assistant Secretary of Health and Human Services for Children and Families, testified before the House Education Committee in July on reform possibilities for Head Start, which last year was budgeted to serve more than 900,000 children. He described a reorientation of the program to focus on better preparing children to enter kindergarten with stronger literacy skills.

"Head Start needs to focus more on such indicators of early literacy as children's knowledge of letters," Horn suggested.

DoEd Pursues Management Improvements

One area where the Bush administration has had its greatest impact on the way the federal Department of Education (DoEd) does business is in improved financial management of the department. The extent of this impact will be known more fully this month, when independent auditors issue their opinion on whether these improvements have been sufficient to earn DoEd a clean annual audit. In its last four yearly audits, the department received only "qualified opinions" that cited a variety of problems.

In testimony before the House Education Committee in 2001, the General Accounting Office described "severe weaknesses" in the department's internal financial controls. At that time, Education Secretary Rod Paige established a Management Improvement Team that included senior department officials and career managers to fix the problems and meet President Bush's mandate for a clean audit.

"Special education, Head Start, and higher education programs will be among the top education priorities when the 108th Congress convenes in January."

In a status report released October 30, 2002, the team described changes made to date, including requiring executives and managers to adhere to performance contracts with clear individual job performance expectations, and ending abuse of purchase and travel credit cards by issuing specific penalties to be taken against employees.

Rees Selected to Head Office of Innovation

In September, Paige announced the appointment of former *School Reform News* contributing editor Nina Shokraii Rees to serve as Deputy Undersecretary of Education and head of the department's new Office of Innovation and Improvement. Rees earned a reputation as an influential school reformer during her tenure as senior education analyst for The Heritage Foundation, and subsequently served as a domestic policy advisor to Vice President Dick Cheney.

The new office will consolidate programs for public school choice, charter schools, and magnet schools. According to Paige, it also will work with other department offices to coordinate the supplemental services and public school choice provisions of the No Child Left Behind Act.

Don Soifer is executive vice president of the Lexington Institute. His email address is soifer@lexingtoninstitute.org.

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GRADUATION RATES BY STATE AND RACE

STATE	NATIVE AMERICAN	ASIAN	HISPANIC	AFRICAN AMERICAN	WHITE	TOTAL
Alabama	86%	79%	INS	59%	68%	**66%**
Alaska	49%	INS	61%	61%	65%	**61%**
Arizona	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	**59%**
Arkansas	INS	90%	INS	68%	77%	**75%**
California	61%	81%	55%	59%	75%	**66%**
Colorado	52%	78%	49%	55%	74%	**69%**
Connecticut	INS	84%	53%	62%	82%	**76%**
Delaware	INS	INS	49%	56%	72%	**67%**
District of Columbia	INS	INS	55%	64%	INS	**58%**
Florida	INS	81%	48%	46%	60%	**55%**
Georgia	INS	INS	INS	47%	63%	**56%**
Hawaii	INS	70%	67%	INS	69%	**69%**
Idaho	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	**79%**
Illinois	76%	95%	57%	57%	86%	**77%**
Indiana	INS	86%	57%	50%	77%	**73%**
Iowa	INS	74%	INS	58%	87%	**85%**
Kansas	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	**74%**
Kentucky	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	**71%**
Louisiana	58%	80%	73%	57%	73%	**66%**
Maine	INS	INS	INS	INS	73%	**73%**
Maryland	INS	90%	INS	63%	77%	**72%**
Massachusetts	INS	73%	50%	66%	77%	**73%**
Michigan	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	**NA**
Minnesota	44%	INS	INS	INS	85%	**80%**
Mississippi	INS	INS	23%	60%	68%	**63%**
Missouri	INS	92%	INS	58%	78%	**75%**
Montana	50%	INS	INS	INS	84%	**81%**
Nebraska	40%	INS	INS	53%	88%	**84%**
Nevada	48%	INS	INS	56%	68%	**60%**
New Hampshire	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	**69%**
New Jersey	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	**87%**
New Mexico	51%	88%	53%	63%	74%	**64%**
New York	49%	75%	40%	46%	78%	**64%**
North Carolina	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	**63%**
North Dakota	56%	INS	INS	INS	89%	**86%**
Ohio	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	**76%**
Oklahoma	68%	90%	INS	64%	78%	**74%**
Oregon	49%	78%	46%	46%	68%	**66%**
Pennsylvania	INS	82%	50%	59%	83%	**78%**
Rhode Island	INS	66%	54%	60%	74%	**71%**
South Carolina	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	**59%**
South Dakota	INS	INS	INS	INS	89%	**83%**
Tennessee	INS	69%	INS	46%	63%	**60%**
Texas	63%	82%	57%	61%	76%	**67%**
Utah	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	**86%**
Vermont	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	**77%**
Virginia	INS	86%	62%	66%	78%	**75%**
Washington	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	**68%**
West Virginia	INS	INS	INS	74%	83%	**83%**
Wisconsin	54%	INS	54%	41%	87%	**81%**
Wyoming	INS	INS	72%	INS	82%	**80%**
National	57%	79%	53%	55%	76%	**69%**

NA = Data Not Available
INS = Insufficient Information for Calculating Graduation Rate
Source: Public School Graduation Rates in the United States, Table 1, November 2002.

CRISIS continued from page 1

Senior Fellow Jay Greene, a prominent school choice researcher, and Marcus Winter coauthored the study, which reports on the Class of 2000.

The Manhattan analysis threw into question the soundness of government reporting of graduation and dropout rates. The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), an arm of the federal Department of Education, found a high school completion rate of 86.5 percent for the Class of 2000. By contrast, the Manhattan study concluded the national graduation rate was just 69 percent.

Much of the difference results from the NCES practice of counting as high school graduates the recipients of high school equivalence certificates, such as the GED. The Manhattan researchers counted only recipients of regular diplomas. The person who acquires a GED cannot properly be credited to the ledger of a particular high school, they note. Moreover, some respected researchers question the worth of a GED.

A second reason the government's graduation numbers may be inflated is that the NCES depends on states correctly self-reporting their dropouts. But many states do not even attempt to track what happens to individual students, and some apply definitions guaranteed to minimize dropout numbers. For instance, Washington State reports as dropouts only those students who have filled out official dropout paperwork. Others who left school without completing the forms are classified as "unknowns," of whom there are many.

On a federal district/state-by-state basis, Manhattan placed Florida public schools in the cellar with an overall graduation rate of 55 percent, followed closely by Georgia (56 percent), the District of Columbia (58 percent), and Arizona and South Carolina (each 59 percent). New Jersey could boast of the highest overall graduation rate at 87 percent, followed by North Dakota and Utah (each 86 percent), and Iowa (85 percent).

Black-White Gap

Disparities between majority and minority graduation rates were among the most disturbing findings, according to Greene and Winters. For instance, although Wisconsin had an overall graduation rate of 81 percent, it had the lowest graduation rate for African-Americans (41 percent). And Nebraska, which had the fifth best overall graduation rate, was in the lower third for African-American graduations and dead last in graduation rate for Native Americans at 40 percent. Some other highs and lows:

- Highest rate of graduation for black students: 74 percent in West Virginia.
- Lowest graduation rate for Hispanics: 23 percent in Mississippi. Highest: 73 percent in Louisiana.
- Highest graduation rate for Native American students: 86 percent in Alabama.
- Lowest rate of graduation for Asian public school students: 66 percent in Rhode Island. Highest: 95 percent in Illinois.
- Lowest graduation rate for white students: Florida at 60 percent. Highest: 89 percent in North Dakota.

The results caused a bit of a stir in Florida, which in 1998-99 switched to a system of tracking individual students through high school rather than comparing a raw number of graduates against ninth-grade enrollment four years earlier. Tracking is considered to yield more precise results. In order to obtain state-by-state comparisons, the Manhattan team compared federal data on the size of freshman classes in each state—adjusted for population shifts and transfers—with diploma numbers four years later. A spokesman for the Florida Board of Education asserted, "We don't do estimates, we do calculations, and it's a world of difference."

"The national graduation rates were 55 percent for African-American students, 53 percent for Hispanics, and 57 percent for Native Americans. The highest graduation rates were 79 percent for Asians and 76 percent for whites."

Even so, the state's official graduation rate of 62.3 percent was just 7.3 percentage points higher than the Manhattan figure. The state counts GED recipients as graduates, while the think tank did not.

"When you add the GED in there, it tends to make the problem look less critical in people's eyes," Jay Smink, executive director of the National Dropout Prevention Center, told the *Orlando Sentinel*. "Although there is value to getting a GED, I don't want to downplay that, but it is not a high school diploma and it sends a different message to employers."

State officials noted Florida's graduation rates have been rising in recent years. Governor Jeb Bush added that comparisons of states using varied methods of calculation are problematic.

"If other states don't have exit tests, and they have low standards and they have grade inflation and they are just passing kids along, it doesn't necessarily mean they're adding much value," said Bush.

Manhattan issued its first dropout study in 2001, but refined its methodology for the 2002 report. Winters said that with annual updates, the researchers will be able to document whether Governor Bush's education reforms, which include vouchers for students in chronically failing public schools, are having an impact on Florida graduation rates. Manhattan maintains a research office in Davie, Florida to study the impact of that state's school reform measures.

Robert Holland is a senior fellow at the Lexington Institute, a public policy think tank in Arlington, Virginia. His email address is rholl1176@yahoo.com.

For more information...

WWW The 20-page report by Jay Greene and Marcus Winter from the Manhattan Institute for Policy Research, "Public School Graduation Rates in the United States," is available through *PolicyBot*. Point your Web browser to **http://www.heartland.org**, click on the *PolicyBot* icon, and search for document **#10901**.

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Small Schools Are Cost-Effective

Yet communities keep building larger and larger schools

BY GEORGE A. CLOWES

A new review of research on school size concludes investing in smaller rather than larger schools is a wise move when the cost per graduate is taken into account.

In making the case that small schools are not cost-prohibitive, the report identifies educational and social benefits of small schools and contrasts these with the negative effects large schools have on students, teachers, and members of the community.

"Many decision-makers ... are reluctant to embrace small schools for fear they are not economical and place an unnecessarily heavy burden on taxpayers," note the authors of the report, *Dollars and Sense: The Cost-Effectiveness of Small Schools*, published in September 2002 by the KnowledgeWorks Foundation. The report shows "there are many economic arguments in support of small schools and that it is fiscally responsible to spend school construction dollars on small school facilities."

As a consequence of school district consolidation between 1950 and 1975, the number of public schools in the U.S. has declined dramatically over the past half century, and the size of the average school increased from just over 100 students to well over 600. Many high schools now enroll more than 1,000 students.

For more information…

WWW The 44-page September 2002 report from the KnowledgeWorks Foundation, *Dollars and Sense: The Cost-Effectiveness of Small Schools*, is available through *PolicyBot*. Point your Web browser to **http://www.heartland.org**, click on the *PolicyBot* icon, and search for document **#10902**.

Although the trend towards larger and larger schools continues to this day, it has not been driven by studies showing the benefits of larger schools. In fact, it has been more than three decades since a study was published recommending larger schools, according to Indiana University researcher Tom Gregory. What drives the creation of larger schools, the report suggests, are the following state policies:

- minimum enrollment qualifications for state funding of school facilities;
- excessive acreage requirements, which tend to push officials to consolidate smaller schools;
- policies that discourage renovation and maintenance of older schools by triggering new construction when renovation costs exceed a certain level.

State policy can be contradictory, too. While North Carolina's facilities planning guidelines recommend a minimum school size of 450 students, the same publication lists much smaller school sizes for improved safety and violence reduction: elementary, 300-400; middle, 300-600; and high school, 400-800.

"Most researchers have determined a measurable positive relationship of smaller school size to safety, climate, and order," state the North Carolina facilities planning guidelines.

Enrollment Per Grade Is Key

The *Dollars and Sense* report points out that a 500-student school with grades K-8 is a not the same "size" as a school with 500 students in grades 3-4. The first is a "small" school with 56 students per grade; the second is a "large" school with 250 students per grade.

"Including a *wider* rather than *narrower* grade span configuration is a better way to reap the advantages of small schools," argue the report's authors, noting research has identified "social and academic liabilities" to having narrow grade spans.

The report suggests the following ideal upper limits of "small size" for schools with conventionally wide grade spans:

- Elementary grades 1-6: 25 students per grade level; 150 total enrollment;
- Elementary grades 1-8: 25 students per grade level; 200 total enrollment;
- Middle grades 5-8: 50 students per grade level; 200 total enrollment;
- High school grades 9-12: 75 students per grade level; 300 total enrollment.

Benefits of Small Schools

Studies have shown small schools can operate more flexibly and more responsively than large schools because there is less formal bureaucracy. Students and teachers in small schools know each other better, there are higher levels of teacher satisfaction, and community members are more involved with the schools.

"There is less violence in small schools, less vandalism, a heightened sense of belonging, and better attendance," the report states. "Students earn higher grade point averages, and more participate in extracurricular activities."

One of the most important characteristics of small schools is that their dropout rates tend to be lower than those for large schools. Besides having a profound effect on the lives of the students, lower dropout rates have a profound effect on the cost-effectiveness of small versus large schools.

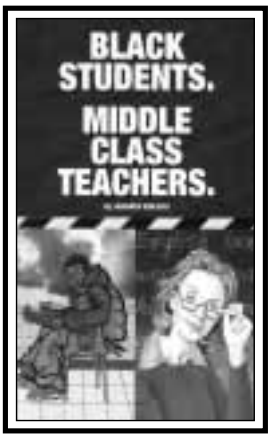
For example, when reseachers at New York University's Institute for Education and Social Policy examined 1995-96 data for 128 high schools, they found schools with fewer than 600 students spent $7,628 annually per student, while larger schools spent only $6,218.

But when the researchers took dropout rates into account, they discovered the cost per graduate at the small schools was slightly lower than the per-graduate cost at the larger schools.

Other researchers also have reported higher graduation rates in smaller schools, including those serving poor students, and higher percentages of graduates going on to post-secondary education.

"Large schools are expensive to individuals, their communities, and the nation because there are many hidden costs," the report concludes. It urges communities and policymakers to "treasure their small schools" and protect them with sound policies and financial support.

George A. Clowes is managing editor of School Reform News.



African American IMAGES

by Dr. Jawanza Kunjufu
176 pages - index and references
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Colorado Parents Want More Choices in Education

BY PAMELA BENIGNO

A group of 18 minority parents and grassroots leaders in the Colorado school choice movement met with Representatives Don Lee (R-Littleton) and Nancy Spence (R-Centennial) over lunch in November to discuss the need for a voucher bill in the Centennial State. The meeting, hosted by the Independence Institute, drew participants from Denver, Greeley, and Colorado Springs.

Spence, chairman of the House Education Committee, explained she is planning to sponsor legislation that would provide an "Opportunity Scholarship" to low-income students who attend low-performing schools in the Denver Public Schools system. A large contingent of attendees from Colorado Springs, who had traveled 60 miles to participate in the discussion, expressed their desire for a school choice program to serve the children in their community, too.

"My concern is for the parent's choice," stated Cynthia Gant from Colorado Springs. "I know what is best for my child."

Tuition scholarship organizations have waiting lists overflowing with applications from hundreds of low-income children, according to Kathy Porter of Denver's Alliance for Choice in Education and Evelyn Taylor of Parents Challenge in Colorado Springs. Those scholarships are attracting not the best students in the public schools—as critics charge—but children who are not succeeding there. The majority of scholarship recipients are thriving in independent schools, reported Taylor.

Hon. Nancy Spence (R-Centennial)
Colorado State Representative

"They are outperforming their counterparts in the public schools," she said.

Currently, the independent schools achieve these results without being subject to government reporting requirements for student performance and financial accounting, but that could change if students came with publicly funded scholarships, such as vouchers. For religious schools, that raises concerns over the entanglement of church and state. Silver State Baptist School Principal Rudy Gomez, one of several independent school officials present at the meeting, expressed his concern over having to meet government accountability standards.

"The Colorado General Assembly convenes in January, and at least five school choice bills have been proposed."

"We expect parents to keep us accountable," he said.

While Spence agreed parents have kept the independent schools accountable, she maintained that schools choosing to participate in a government school choice program would have to be subject to additional accountability measures.

The Colorado General Assembly convenes in January, and at least five school choice bills have been proposed. Besides Spence's "Opportunity Scholarship" legislation, Rep. Shawn Mitchell (R-Broomfield) plans to sponsor a universal voucher bill. Rep. Keith King (R-Colorado Springs) and Sen. Bob Hagedorn (D-Aurora) plan to sponsor two very different tax credit bills, and Sen. Bruce Cairns (R-Aurora) will introduce, for the second year, legislation he calls a "Property Tax Offset."

School choice activists hope the Supreme Court's decision in *Zelman v. Simmons-Harris* will influence the Assembly to approve school choice options like these for Colorado's children.

Pamela Benigno is director of the Education Policy Center at the Independence Institute in Golden, Colorado. Her email address is pam@i2i.org.

Hillsdale College Announces the Seventh Recipient of the $25,000

Henry Salvatori Prize For "Excellence in Teaching"

Each fall, Hillsdale College seeks nominations for the Henry Salvatori Prize for "Excellence in Teaching." This prize honors teachers in grades K-12 who are committed to rigorous standards and to a traditional, time-tested approach to education. Endowed by the late businessman and philanthropist Henry Salvatori, this competition is open to teachers in non-profit private and public schools who have employed the *Hillsdale Academy Reference Guide*. Winners receive a $25,000 cash award payable to their school.

Mr. Micah Porter, of D' Evelyn Junior/Senior High School in Denver, Colorado, is hereby named the recipient of the 2002 Henry Salvatori Prize for "Excellence in Teaching."

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Mr. Micah Porter
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Panel Faults Research Critical of NBPTS Certification

But qualitative research supporting NBPTS is left unquestioned

BY ROBERT HOLLAND

Do teachers certified by the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS) make a difference in raising student achievement?

"Yes," said NBPTS officials, who just a year ago issued an open call for research to answer the question, saying they were "not just looking for feel-good research."

But when a study of Tennessee teachers came back with a "No" answer last summer, a review panel organized by the Education Commission of the States (ECS) quickly found fault with the research.

ECS President Ted Sanders, who served on a Carnegie-funded national commission that recommended a vast expansion of NBPTS' influence, asserted in a letter that an ECS panel had found the Tennessee study by Professor J.E. Stone, founder of the Education Consumers Clearinghouse, to be based on "inadequate data." Stone had found NBPTS-certified teachers in the Volunteer State were no more effective than non-NBPTS-certified teachers in raising student achievement.

"Until the Tennessee study questioned the value of NBPTS certification, ECS has never questioned nor seen the need to review studies, commissioned by the NBPTS, that assert the effectiveness of national certification."

Rare Scrutiny

As a result of this experience, said Sanders, "we have had our belief reinforced" that education research on key issues "must be subjected to rigorous scrutiny prior to its dissemination."

Until the Tennessee study questioned the value of NBPTS certification, ECS has never questioned nor seen the need to review studies, commissioned by the NBPTS, that assert the effectiveness of national certification. Even so, ECS styles itself as a watchdog acting on behalf of state governments, many of which assume the validity of the national certification process by awarding bonuses of up to $7,500 to teachers who meet NBPTS requirements.

To promote the validity of national certification, NBPTS officials often tout a study by researchers at the University of North Carolina/Greensboro, who compared 31 teachers awarded national certification with 34 who were not. The Greensboro team, funded by the U.S. Department of Education and NBPTS, found the certified teachers performed significantly better on most of the subjective criteria assessed by the NBPTS standards, such as "multidimensional perception." The study did not, however, look at the teachers' effect on actual student achievement.

Certification and Student Achievement

Stone's research did. Drawing on data from the Tennessee Value-Added Assessment System for the 16 NBPTS-certified grades 3-8 teachers in Tennessee who have value-added teacher reports in the state database, Stone, a professor at East Tennessee State University, found in May 2002 that the nationally board-certified teachers had not risen above average in bringing about increased achievement by their students. (See "Nationally Certified Teachers Come Up Short on Achievement," *School Reform News*, August 2002.)

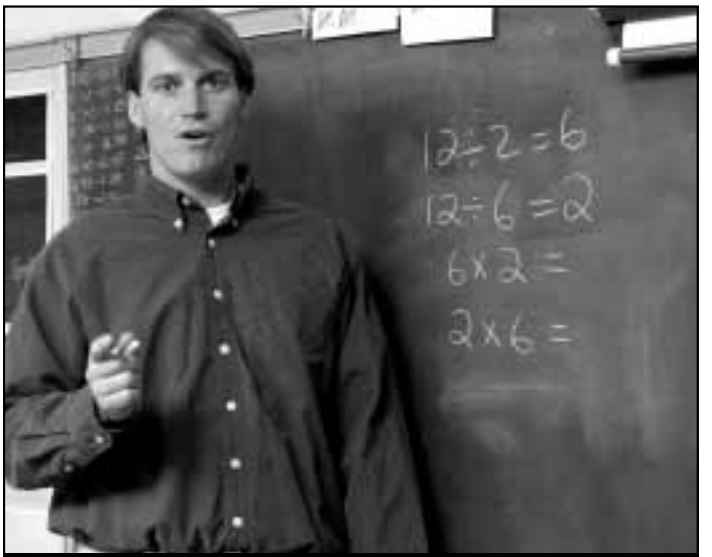
Using the value-added yardstick and looking at the 16 NBPTS-certified teachers collectively, Stone found only 14 percent of scores on various subjects were at least 15 percent above the national normal gain—Tennessee's "A" standard—while 10 percent of scores were less than 85 percent of the national normal gain—Tennessee's "F" standard. With the bulk of scores falling between those extremes, the student achievement gains realized under NBPTS teachers were no greater than gains made under other teachers, according to Stone.

Since Stone used only 16 of the 40 NBPTS-certified teachers in Tennessee, the four-member panel assembled by ECS to critique the Tennessee study claimed Stone had not made clear how he selected the "study sample" of 16 teachers. However, Stone's study explicitly stated the 16 teachers were those who "teach in grades three through eight and therefore have value-added 'teacher reports' in the state database." They were not a sample at all, but the entire universe of NBPTS-certified teachers in Tennessee for whom value-added data were available.

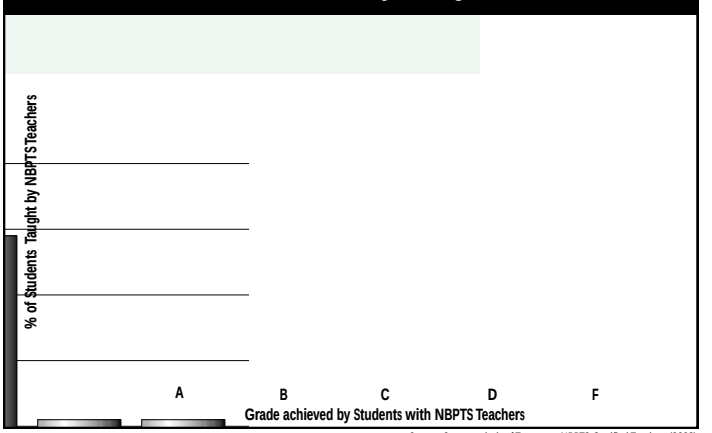
"When a certification process is checked 16 times and found wrong every instance, any reasonable person would say it isn't trustworthy regardless of what might be inferred about others who have been certified by the same process," Stone commented.

Red Herring

Nevertheless, the ECS review panel chose to focus its attention on the number of certified teachers in the study, which was about half the number in the Greensboro study. University of Pennsylvania Dean Susan Fuhrman, who headed the ECS panel that reviewed Stone's work, reported her reviewers were unanimous in finding that Stone's conclusions "severely overreach," adding: "It would be hazardous enough to base recommendations about the whole NBPTS system on a study of teachers in only one state. Relying on the Stone study, which provides no data about sample teachers that would enable interpretation and includes an extraordinarily small sample, is impossible."



NBPTS-Certified Teachers Deliver Only Average Student Achievement



Source: Stone analysis of Tennessee NBPTS-Certified Teachers (2002)

For more information…

WWW The Education Commission of the States' panel review of the J.E. Stone study can be found on the Internet at **http://www.ecs.org/html/special/nbpts/PanelReport.htm**.

Stone's response to the ECS review and his original study of Tennessee NBPTS-certified teachers are available at the Web site of the Education Consumers Clearinghouse. The URL for the response is **http://www.education-consumers.com/briefs/Controversy.htm**; the URL for the study is **http://www.education-consumers.com/briefs/stoneNBPTS.shtm**.

Educating Teachers: The Best Minds Speak Out, published in June 2002 by the American Council of Trustees and Alumni, is available in paperback for $14.95 through Amazon.com. Point your Web browser to **http://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/ASIN/0970805810/theheartlandinst**.

The ECS fault-finding panel also took a swipe at the use of teacher effects data from the Terra Nova test, from which the Tennessee value-added system draws data for analysis of teacher impact. The panel commented that "some teachers increase student scores on multiple-choice tests like Terra Nova by narrowly focusing on the specific knowledge and skills it covers. If teachers recognized by the NBPTS do not focus so narrowly while other teachers do, their students may not perform as well as the students of other teachers." That statement not only implies a disdain for objective testing, but also suggests the ECS panel supports the NBPTS' definition of great teaching, which does not require evidence of measurable impacts on students.

The ECS reaction to the Stone study suggests the education establishment is worried criticism could threaten the accreditation, licensure, and certification standards enforced largely through schools of education. A new report by the American Council of Trustees and Alumni titled "Educating Teachers: The Best Minds Speak Out" provides perspective on the stakes in this debate.

Robert Holland is a senior fellow at the Lexington Institute in Arlington, Virginia. His email address is rholl1176@yahoo.com.

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Children's mean reading, mathematics and general knowledge performance in kindergarten and first grade, by child and family characteristics

	Kindergarten Fall 1998	Kindergarten Spring 1999	First Grade Fall 1999	First Grade Spring 2000
GENERAL KNOWLEDGE PERFORMANCE				
Total	22.67	27.74	30.87	35.48
Socioeconomic status				
Lowest 20 percent	16.61	21.55	24.36	29.43
Middle 60 percent	22.39	27.55	30.74	36.00
Highest 20 percent	27.77	32.68	35.89	39.90
Percent of Average Gain				
Lowest 20 percent		**97%**		**110%**
Middle 60 percent		**102%**		**114%**
Highest 20 percent		**97%**		**87%**
MATHEMATICS OVERALL PERFORMANCE				
Total	19.80	27.95	33.00	43.79
Socioeconomic status				
Lowest 20 percent	14.72	21.81	26.44	37.21
Middle 60 percent	19.49	27.66	33.04	43.73
Highest 20 percent	24.58	33.14	38.87	48.63
Percent of Average Gain				
Lowest 20 percent		**87%**		**100%**
Middle 60 percent		**100%**		**99%**
Highest 20 percent		**105%**		**90%**

Source: Table 48, Digest of Education Statistics 2001; calculations by School Reform News.

GAPS continued from page 1

ent educational level—each student can gain a year's worth of learning in a year of schooling. Whether or not this happens depends largely on the quality of the student's teacher.

"Effective schooling trumps socioeconomic circumstances," declared Sanders in a September 20 address to Chicago United. "Schooling matters," he added. "It matters a lot."

Value-added assessment measures what fraction of each student's expected one-year learning gain is actually delivered by each teacher. The pattern of gains achieved by differently skilled students provides insight into how well a teacher's lessons are reaching different students—the high and the low performers as well as the average performers.

"The biggest factor affecting student achievement is teacher effectiveness," said Sanders, who emphasizes that class size effects and differences in ethnicity, family income, and urban-suburban location fade into insignificance when compared to teacher effects.

The way Sanders' system works can be seen by applying the concept of value-added to data published by the National Center for Education Statistics in the most recent edition of its *Digest of Education Statistics, 2001*. Table 48 provides Spring and Fall test scores, sorted by child and family characteristics, from the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study for children in kindergarten and first grade.

The test scores reported for general knowledge and mathematics with children grouped by socioeconomic status are shown in the accompanying table, together with calculations by *School Reform News* to convert the Fall-to-Spring test score gains to percentages of the average gain.

For more information…

WWW SAS inSchool is a division of the SAS Institute. Information on SAS inSchool's value-added assessment, together with pricing information and links to related articles, is available on the Internet at **http://www.sasinschool.com/index.shtml**.

The longitudinal test score data are from Table 48 of the *Digest of Education Statistics, 2001*, published by the National Center for Education Statistics and available at **http://nces.ed.gov/pubs2002/digest2001/tables/dt048.asp.**

Dr. William L. Sanders may be reached at **bill.sanders@sas.com**. An exclusive interview with Sanders, published in the November 1999 issue of *School Reform News*, is available on the Heartland Institute Web site at **http://www.heartland.org/Article.cfm?artId=11119**

Social Promotion

The first question prompted by the raw data has to do with social promotion: Is it good educational practice to promote the lowest-performing students to the challenge of first grade work when their Spring kindergarten test score for general knowledge (21.55) is lower than the average test score for students entering kindergarten (22.67)?

Adding Educational Value One Floor at a Time

The value-added concept of educating a child is like constructing a 13-story building one floor at a time, starting with the kindergarten entry level on the ground floor.

Under the direction and guidance of teachers, each child finds, grasps, and puts into place the elements of the educational framework necessary to support the next level of learning. When the framework for each level is firmly bolted in place and passes inspection, the child is permitted to climb atop the assembly and begin construction of the next floor of learning. After 13 such operations, a high school graduation ceremony marks the topping out of the child's individual educational building.

"University of North Carolina Research Fellow William L. Sanders ... [says] teacher effectiveness has by far the largest influence on student achievement."

If a soundly built floor is added at each level—one year of learning for each year of schooling—then each child's educational structure would have 13 stories. But the 69 percent U.S. high school graduation rate in 2000 means almost one in three students abandons work on his or her educational development well before reaching 13 stories. And the prevalence of permissive inspection processes—otherwise known as "social promotion"—means many Americans with high school diplomas find themselves with educational structures that fall far short of 13 sound stories because of missing or incomplete floors.

The notion that all students are capable of creating their own 13-story educational structures has been a staple of federal education policy since passage of the 1965 Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) in the "Great Society" administration of President Lyndon B. Johnson. The focus of federal policy has been on helping low-income children develop the foundation required to support a 13-story building and to provide them with assistance in getting the initial floors under way. Those efforts were expected to raise educational achievement overall and especially that of low-income, predominantly minority children.

But when the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) reviewed the long-term educational performance of America's youth some 35 years after passage of ESEA, two conclusions were most striking:

- how little overall student performance has changed over three decades; and
- how achievement gaps between different groups of students have persisted despite the attention and resources specifically devoted to closing those gaps.

Although scores for white students in three subject areas for three different age groups are higher than those for black and Hispanic students throughout the three decades of testing, this learning gap narrowed in almost all areas during the 1980s. But since then, the gap has again widened. The NAEP reading data, for example, show that by 1990, the average 17-year-old black student had improved to the point where his or her reading skills were about the same as a 13-year-old white student. In other words, the reading structure for 17-year-olds was 12 stories high for whites and only eight stories high for blacks. The 1990s saw no further improvement.

While excuses are legion—with inadequate funding, large class sizes, low student quality, and uninvolved parents taking the brunt of the blame—University of North Carolina Research Fellow William L. Sanders instead points to teachers as the key to educational improvement. Teacher effectiveness, he says, has by far the largest influence on student achievement.

William Sanders speaking at Chicago United.

Sander's Value-Added Assessment system is designed to report on the effectiveness of individual teachers and to suggest where the efforts of less-effective teachers should be focused in order to raise the achievement levels of all their students.

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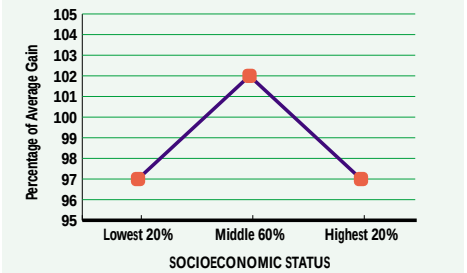
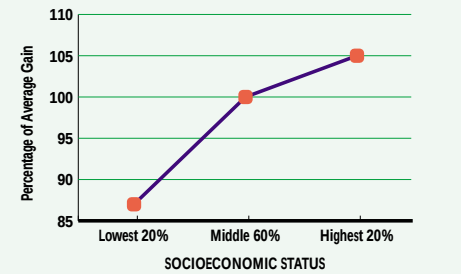
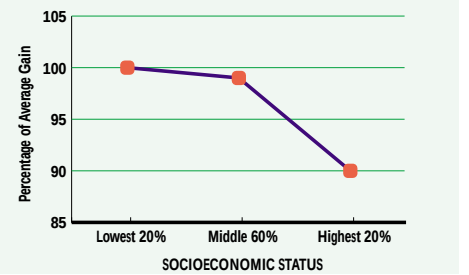
Teaching to the Middle: "Tent" Pattern



Teaching to the Top: "Reverse Shed" Pattern



Teaching to the Bottom: "Shed" Pattern



Teaching to the Middle

When the relative achievement gains for each socioeconomic group are placed on a chart, the pattern of gains in general knowledge in kindergarten exhibit what Sanders calls a "tent" pattern, where gains are higher for average-performing students than for low- or high-performing students. This "tent" pattern is the result of a teacher's lesson being targeted to average students.

If repeated for several grades, the long-term result of this teaching pattern is that low-performing students fall further behind, and the achievement of once high-performing students regresses to the average.

Teaching to the Top

The pattern of gains in mathematics in kindergarten exhibits what Sanders calls a "reverse shed" pattern, where higher gains are achieved by previously higher-performing students. This is the result of a teacher's lesson being aimed at challenging the top-performing students.

If repeated for several grades, the long-term result of this teaching pattern is that low-performing students fall further behind both average and high-performing students. According to Sanders, this pattern is seen more frequently in suburban school systems.

Teaching to the Bottom

The pattern of gains in mathematics in first grade exhibit what Sanders calls a "shed" pattern, where higher gains are achieved by previously lower-performing students. This is the result of a teacher's lesson being aimed at bringing up the lowest-performing students.

If repeated for several grades, the long-term result of this teaching pattern is to raise the achievement of low-performing students at the expense of once high-performing students, whose achievement levels fall back to the average.

According to Sanders, this is a pattern often seen in urban and rural school systems. In those systems, this erosion in the performance of early high performers historically has been attributed to cultural influences. Value-added assessment shows educational practices also contribute significantly to the erosion.

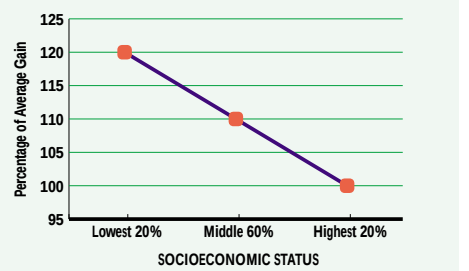
"We cannot overlook these [previously high-scoring] children," urged Sanders. "We have to give them the opportunity to make progress from where they are."

The Ideal Pattern

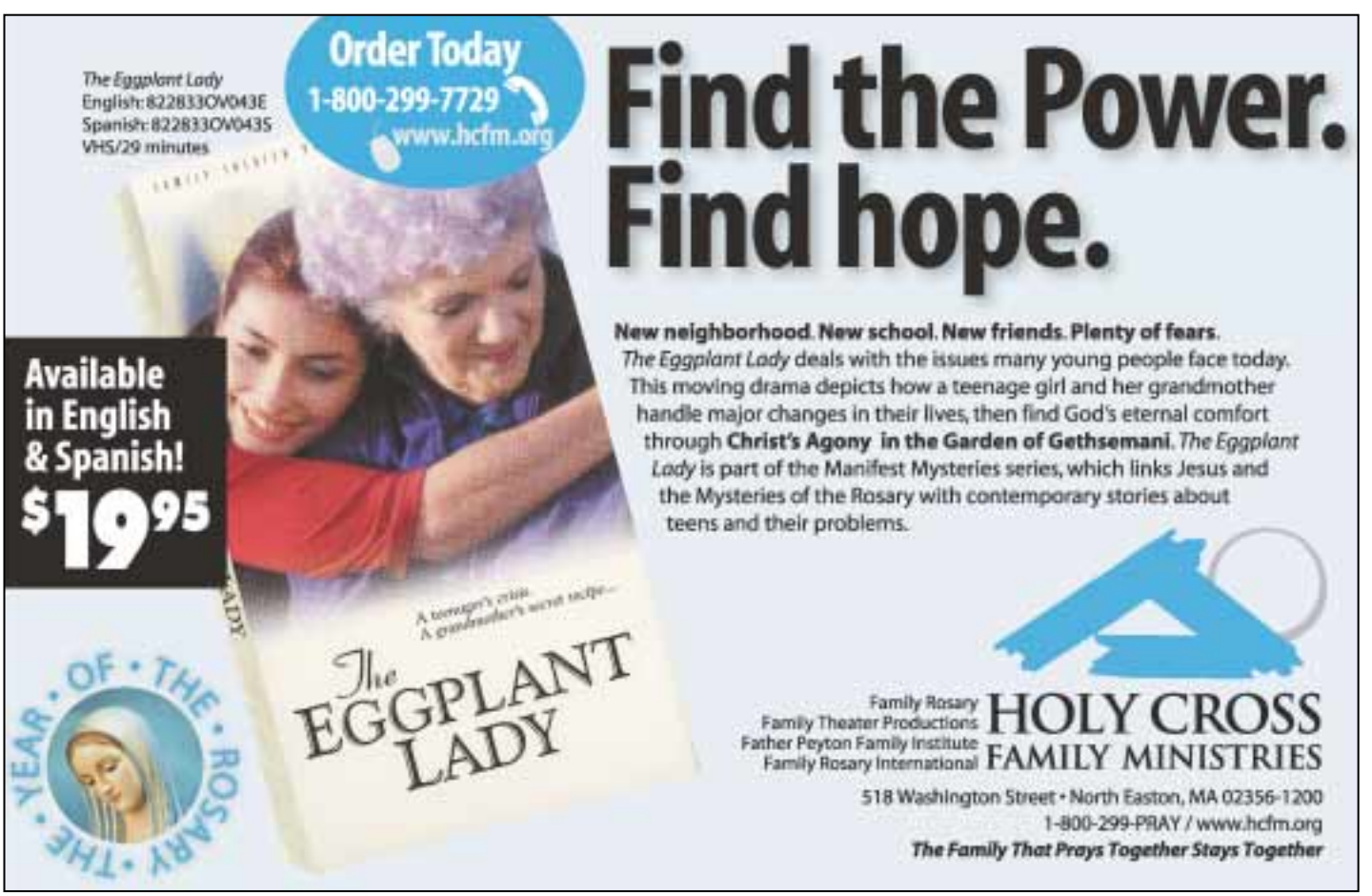
According to Sanders, an ideal gain pattern would be a downward-sloping "shed" pattern with the previous top scorers achieving a gain of 100 percent, the previous bottom scorers achieving gains in the range of 110 to 130 percent, and average students achieving gains somewhere between those two extremes.

"This is how you close achievement gaps and do it the right way," said Sanders.

Ideal Teaching Pattern: Gains for All



George A. Clowes is managing editor of School Reform News.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The Friedman Report

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The Milton and Rose D. Friedman Foundation is a nonprofit, 501(c)(3) organization established in 1996 by Milton and Rose Friedman. The origins of the foundation lie in the Friedmans' long-standing concern about the serious deficiencies in America's elementary and secondary public schools. The best way to improve the quality of education, they believe, is to enable all parents to have a truly free choice of the schools that their children attend. The Friedman Foundation works to build upon this vision, clarify its meaning to the general public, and amplify the national call for true education reform through school choice. Contact us at *www.friedmanfoundation.org* for more information.

The Milton & Rose D. Friedman Foundation
One American Square #1760
Indianapolis, IN 46282

An Advocate in Action

Friedman fellow with a penchant for puns chips away at voucher opponent lies

BY LAURA J. SWARTLEY

Dan McGroarty always has a catchy title for his incisive works that tear apart voucher opponents' arguments and expose misinformation campaigns directed against parental freedom of choice: "Gameplan: The Teachers' Unions' Strategy for Defeating the Voucher Movement," "Voucher Wars," and recently, "The Blaine Game" and "The Red Tape Wars."

McGroarty's talent with language led him from graduate school to writing commentary for the Voice of America, and into the White House speechwriting office under President George H.W. Bush. He has also been the behind-the-scenes wordsmith for such public officials as Defense Secretary Caspar Weinberger and Senator Frank Carlucci.

Today, McGroarty writes from his home office in Chevy Chase, Maryland, a "converted back bedroom with enough electronic equipment to run a local phone company, with a small sign hanging on the knob reading GO AWAY," he said. "Which I mean in the nicest sense." McGroarty is now senior director of the White House Writers Group, founded with colleagues from his Bush administration days.

As a young White House speechwriter, McGroarty had the opportunity to meet Milwaukee's passionate school choice crusader, Polly Williams. "I was immediately fascinated with the Milwaukee story," he said.

After Bush Senior's defeat in 1992, McGroarty says his time was freed up to get a book on school choice "off the drawing board and onto paper." That book, *Break These Chains: The Battle for School Choice* (Prima), was published in 1996. The title was inspired by a quote from Polly Williams: "We've got to break these chains before the system turns our children into slaves."

His next book, *Trinnietta Gets a Chance: Six Families and Their School Choice Experiences* (The Heritage Foundation, 2001), put a human face on school choice at a time when abstract legal and constitutional principles were being debated in the U.S. Supreme Court. Since his side won that argument in June 2002, McGroarty has focused his energies on combating lies about school choice propagated by teacher unions and other foes. He has written a series of briefs for the Friedman Foundation on accountability of private schools and misuse of the archaic Blaine Amendments by opponents of school choice at the state level.

McGroarty's philosophy of school choice is one of an empathetic parent. A father of four, he and his wife Jacky have chosen public schools for their children. McGroarty himself attended public schools, K-12.

Dan McGroarty is an adjunct fellow for the Milton & Rose D. Friedman Foundation.

For more information…

WWW Dan McGroarty's 1996 book, *Break These Chains*, is available through Amazon.com at **http://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/ASIN/0761505075/theheartlandinst**.

"The difference is the choice I have, due to economic circumstances, to move my kids to a private school should it seem to offer a course of study or pedagogical approach better suited to my child," he said. He cannot see why he should have this privilege that lower-income families lack.

"My personal experience buttresses my policy preference for programs that provide the same freedom and flexibility to all families—removing income, or lack of it, as an obstacle to choice," he explained.

Indeed, McGroarty's reverence for the Constitution informs his view on school choice as an issue of fundamental equity of opportunity. "Public education," he said, "on a philosophical level means an education that serves and advances the public interest in a literate citizenry.

"Nothing in the democratic DNA of this nation demands that our only form of education should be state-run schools; indeed the democratic principle argues for independent options and alternatives, in which private choice contributes to the public good."

Friedman: Parents Could Split Voucher Among Vendors

BY GEORGE A. CLOWES

School vouchers traditionally have been viewed as education checks that parents would sign over to the school of their choice for a year's worth of educational services for their child.

But what if schools of the future evolve into something like the retail apparel business, where consumers don't spend their clothing dollars only at full-service department stores, but share it also among discount stores and a range of specialized outlets for footwear, rainwear, dresses, shirts, made-to-measure suits, and so on?

"Partial vouchers" would handle this kind of development, suggested Milton Friedman in a recent interview with Pearl Rock Kane published in the Winter 2003 issue of *Education Next*. The Nobel Laureate questioned the assumption that a child should get all of his or her schooling in one brick building and suggested a school voucher could be divided among different vendors of educational services.

"Why not let [parents] spend part of a voucher for math in one place and English or science somewhere else?" asked Friedman. "Why should schooling have to be in one building? Why can't a student take some lessons at home, especially now, with the availability of the Internet?"

For more information…

WWW Pearl Rock Kane's interview with Milton Friedman, titled "Choice & Freedom," is available at the Web site of *Education Next* at **http://www.educationnext.org/20031/57.html**. An unabridged version of the interview is available at **http://www.educationnext.org/unabridged/20031/kane.pdf**.

Further information about *Education Next*, including the contents of the current issue and back issues, plus subscription information, is available at **http://www.educationnext.org**.

There's no reason to expect a competitive K-12 education market would look anything like the present market, said Friedman, explaining the mix and type of schools that survived would depend on which ones satisfied their customers.

"Neither you nor I is imaginative enough to dream of what real competition, a real free market, could produce, what kind of innovations would emerge," Friedman told Kane, an associate professor of education at Columbia University's Teachers College.

The major effect of vouchers would be to reduce the gap between the quality of schooling received by inner-city children versus what is delivered to children from high-income families, explained Friedman. That gap couldn't get any wider than it is now, he said. "It can only get narrower."

Education Next is a publication of the Hoover Institution. In addition to the Friedman interview, the Winter 2003 edition includes articles on teacher certification, charter schools, special education, school reform in Chicago and Philadelphia, and an analysis of whether the Windy City's rising test scores are genuine.

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Election Roundup

CALIFORNIA: Democratic Gov. Gray Davis re-elected.

FLORIDA: Republican Gov. Jeb Bush re-elected.

GEORGIA: Voters replaced Democratic Gov. Roy Barnes with charter school advocate Sonny Perdue.

HAWAII: Incoming Republican governor Linda Lingle, a voucher supporter, is expected to strengthen the state's charter school law.

ILLINOIS: Long succession of GOP governors ends with the election of Democrat Rod Blagojevich, a strong voucher opponent.

MARYLAND: Incoming Republican governor Bob Ehrlich, a voucher supporter, is expected to finally give the Old Line State a charter school law.

MASSACHUSETTS: Republican Mitt Romney elected governor.

MICHIGAN: Voters opted for Democrat Jennifer Granholm, an active opponent of charter schools and school choice, over Republican Lt. Gov. Dick Posthumous, a strong advocate of school vouchers.

NEW HAMPSHIRE: Republican businessman Craig Benson elected governor.

SOUTH CAROLINA: Voters replaced Gov. Jim Hodges with pro-school choice Republican Mark Sanford.

PENNSYLVANIA: Democrat Edward G. Rendell, who opposes vouchers and charter schools, beat Republican Mike Fisher.

TENNESSEE: Democrat Phil Bredesen elected governor.

VERMONT: Republican Jim Douglas, vowing to spend smarter, beat Democrat Lt. Gov. Doug Racine, who called for increased education spending.

WISCONSIN: Republican incumbent Gov. Scott McCallum, supporter of the Milwaukee voucher program, lost to Democrat Jim Doyle, opponent of the program.

Stateline.org
November 21, 2002

School Choice Roundup

BY GEORGE A. CLOWES

DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

Action Urged on Vouchers for DC Students

The Supreme Court's *Zelman v. Simmons-Harris* decision gave Republicans the *permission* to implement school vouchers; the change in the political landscape after last November's midterm elections gave Republicans the *power* to implement school vouchers; but how can Republicans show they now have the *will* to implement school vouchers?

President George W. Bush could "set off a chain reaction of voucher programs in other cities" with a voucher program for children in the nation's capital, suggested Sol Stern in *City Journal*.

"Come January, the president should stand on the steps of one of Washington's worst schools—and there are all too many to choose from—and issue a declaration of conscience that never again will poor black kids in the nation's capital be forced to attend a school that dooms them to failure," said Stern.

The *Wall Street Journal*'s editors echoed Stern's proposal, saying the President now had an opportunity to change the nation's capital from a place that is "condemning tens of thousands of nine- and 10-year-olds to a life of second-class citizenship" into "a showcase for full school choice." While education is largely a local issue, the *Journal*'s editors pointed out the federal government has oversight responsibility for the federal city.

Congress approved voucher legislation for Washington in 1997, when it was withdrawn after President Bill Clinton threatened a veto, and again in 1998, when Clinton vetoed the measure. The Clintons chose not to enroll their own child in the city's schools but instead enrolled her in a private school.

City Journal—November 21, 2002
Wall Street Journal—December 2, 2002

FLORIDA

Vouchers Could Reduce Class Size

If it costs the state of Florida $13,000 to $19,000 per student to create the space to put a student in a public school, and $3,000 to $4,000 to put a student in a private school, which is the better deal for the taxpayers of the Sunshine State?

That's no longer an academic question in Florida, because voters left it up to lawmakers to figure out how to implement a constitutional amendment to reduce class size they approved last November. With first-year costs alone conservatively estimated at $1.1 billion and the state facing a potential $4 billion deficit, implementation won't be easy.

Rep. Stan Jordan (R-Jacksonville), who served for 16 years on the Duval County School Board, wants to offer vouchers to students in any school district that can't meet the class-size mandate "within the student's established attendance zone." The vouchers, which would be available only to students enrolled in public school for at least a year, would be worth 60 percent of the average per-student cost, or about $3,200.

Jordan's proposal, which he plans to introduce as the Constitutional Compliance Assistance Act, found support from House Speaker Designate Johnnie Byrd (R-Plant City) and from Dominic Calabro, president of Florida TaxWatch, a conservative budget watchdog group.

"Vouchers are not only attractive financially, they're practical," Calabro told the *Palm Beach Post*. "You cannot raise taxes today and build the facilities in time to meet the obligation."

Palm Beach Post
November 15, 2002

NEW JERSEY

Voucher Push Continues

School choice advocates at Excellent Education for Everyone (E3) have vowed to continue their push for vouchers in New Jersey even though Governor James E. McGreevey opposes them and there is no voucher bill for the state legislature to consider.

Speaking at E3's second annual conference in November, the Rev. Reginald Jackson, director of the Black Ministers Council of New Jersey, stressed support for school choice didn't mean they had "given up on the public schools." But, he said, public schools would not reform until parents had choices.

"We know they won't get better until they have some competition," explained Jackson.

Star-Ledger
November 20, 2002

SOUTH CAROLINA

Elected on a platform of change to become the first Republican Governor in South Carolina with a Republican-controlled legislature, Mark Sanford has called for a major restructuring of government in the Palmetto State, including changes to the choices available to parents in K-12 education. Among Sanford's education proposals are the following:

- Establish mandatory school choice within districts and voluntary choice between districts.
- Change the state's charter school law to remove the racial quota provision, allow multiple charter school sponsors, and give charter schools fiscal autonomy.
- Facilitate homeschooling.
- Award state grants of up to $3,550 a year to families with children in private schools, under certain circumstances.

The Greenville News
November 17, 2002

TEXAS

Voucher Revival Likely with GOP Control

When the Texas legislature convenes this month, it will have a political constellation unseen for more than a hundred years, with Republicans in charge in the Governor's mansion, in the House, and in the Senate—Gov. Rick Perry, Speaker-elect Tom Craddick, and Lt. Gov.-elect David Dewhurst respectively.

Since all three are on record as supporting a pilot voucher program, that gives hope to a Democrat from Houston, Rep. Ron Wilson, that the pilot voucher bill he has introduced in past sessions will finally win passage.

Wilson sees vouchers as a way for inner-city students to get out of ineffective public schools. That kind of pilot program is supported by Texans by a margin of 47 percent to 44 percent, according to a Scripps Howard Texas Poll of 1,000 adult Texans conducted last October. In a 1999 poll, support was slightly lower at 45 percent.

"Among African-Americans in prison, you'll find that most of them never completed their high school education," Wilson told the *Austin American-Statesman*. "I know that we have to break the cycle and the best way to do that is by educating our children. Right now, the public schools aren't doing that."

But even with a favorable political constellation, vouchers aren't a sure thing, warn the editors of the *American- Statesman*. Wilson plans to reintroduce a bill he and Mike Krusee (R-Williamson County) introduced last year and is allying with other voucher supporters, such as Glenn Lewis (D-Fort Worth) and Kent Grusendorf (R-Arlington). But the Democratic majority's opposition to vouchers has found receptive ears among rural Republicans concerned about the loss of public school jobs and tax revenue that vouchers might bring.

Houston Chronicle—November 15, 2002
Austin American-Statesman—November 24, 2002

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Homeschooling Update

compiled by George A. Clowes

Homeschoolers Harassed in Illinois and California

Despite state laws creating exceptions to compulsory school attendance requirements when parents educate their children at home, public education officials in California and Illinois have begun to treat homeschooled children as truants and in one case threatened to have the children taken away from their parents. When Roger Channell's two boys heard Illinois truant officer Merle Horwedel issue that warning, they took off to hide, according to Channell.

"Now, when anyone rings the doorbell, they're gone," Channell told WorldNetDaily. "They won't even go to the door. They're afraid to look out the windows. Its ridiculous to traumatize kids that way."

During their five years of homeschooling, the Channells responded to queries from public education officials like most Illinois homeschoolers: By stating they complied with state law by teaching the same branches of education as the public schools, and that they did this in English.

But soon after school started last year, a truant officer contacted the Channells and at least 23 other families in the northeastern Illinois counties of Bureau, Henry, and Stark, demanding to speak to the children and review their educational materials.

When the Channells refused to comply, the regional superintendent of the three-county area, Bruce Dennison, referred them to a state's attorney for prosecution for not being "in compliance with the requirements of the Illinois compulsory attendance law."

A regional superintendent does not have the power to regulate homeschooling nor to investigate compliance, according to Chris Klicka, senior counsel for the Home School Legal Defense Association.

Until last summer, homeschool parents in California could comply with state law simply by filing an affidavit with their county department of education, certifying they were teaching their children in a private school. The law didn't change last summer, but Superintendent of Instruction Delaine Eastin's interpretation of the law did: Henceforth, parents who homeschool must be credentialed teachers.

"The classic 'home school'—where children are taught by their parent who does not have a teaching credential—is not a legal means of complying with compulsory education law, which means that home-schooled children are truant," she wrote.

California homeschoolers have resisted the idea of legislation to clear up the definition of homeschooling because they fear additional restrictions may result. But as *Orange County Register* senior editorial writer Steven Greenhut points out, without such clarification "the rights of home-schoolers are subject to this ongoing petty harassment by state officials."

Orange County Register — September 15, 2002
WorldNetDaily.com — November 22, 2002

Milton Friedman on Homeschooling

"There is no other complex field in our society in which do-it-yourself beats out factory production or market production. Nobody makes his or her own car. But it still is the case that parents can perform the job of educating their children, in many cases better than our present education system."
***Education Next*, Winter 2003**

More Blacks Turn to Homeschooling

While the number of homeschooling families almost doubled from 1999 to 2002, the number of black homeschooling families jumped almost 10-fold during that same period, according to estimates by Brian Ray, president of the National Home Educators Research Institute.

Of the 850,000 homeschooling families in 1999, blacks made up only 1 percent, or 8,500. Of the estimated 1.6 million homeschooling families in 2002, blacks made up 5 percent, or 80,000.

While some observers argue black parents should work to improve public schools rather than leaving to homeschool, Sonya Wright of Henrico County told the *Richmond Times-Dispatch* she wasn't willing to sacrifice her children. She started homeschooling when she found her children were two years behind private school children.

"I couldn't believe it," she said. "They were bringing home honor-roll report cards, but they weren't really top students."

When Baltimore City Community College professor Arnita Hicks McArthur surveyed the 1,200 homeschooled children in Baltimore in 2002, she found 500 were black, more than 40 percent. She also found black parents homeschooled their children for pretty much the same reasons other homeschool parents do:

- increased student violence in the public schools, which disrupts the classroom environment and prevents teachers from teaching;
- lack of religious or biblical values in public school instruction;
- homeschooling parents can focus one-on-one on their child's weak points.

Gilbert and Gloria Wilkerson, who have been homeschooling in Henrico County, Virginia for 13 years, created the Network of Black Homeschoolers in 1997 to provide support for other black families. The organization now has about 300 members, publishes a monthly newsletter, and has its own Web site at www.blackhomeschoolers.homestead.com.

Richmond Times-Dispatch — November 15, 2002
Baltimore Sun — November 24, 2002

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AN INTERVIEW WITH JOHN D. MERRIFIELD
BY GEORGE A. CLOWES

"We don't need school choice as a lifeboat; we need it as a reform catalyst. We have a low-performing educational system where some schools are better than others, but few are good. ... So when we talk about duplicating escape hatch programs [like Milwaukee or Cleveland or Florida], we're defining too limited a role for school choice in our reform efforts. That may put school choice in a rut it'll never get out of, because there's nothing harder to change than a government program."

MORE THAN A LIFEBOAT

JOHN D. MERRIFIELD CAN TELL YOU IN AN INSTANT how many years ago Milton Friedman came up with the proposal to dramatically restructure incentives in publicly funded K-12 education by distributing schooling funds directly to all parents with vouchers redeemable at both government-run and privately run schools.

That's because Merrifield was born in 1955, the same year Friedman first published the idea of universal vouchers. It's a happy coincidence, since Merrifield also is a strong advocate of universal vouchers.

An economics professor at the University of Texas-San Antonio, where he has been on the faculty since 1987, Merrifield received his doctorate in economics from the University of Wyoming at Laramie in 1984. While best known for his work on school choice, Merrifield's research interests and publications also include natural resource and environmental economics, international economics, and urban-regional economics. He is a frequent expert panelist/guest on television and radio, commenting on topics such as school choice, water resource management, the Endangered Species Act, clean air, and off-budget government spending.

Although he has been a long-time student of Friedman's ideas, Merrifield's interest in school choice grew as he observed an alarming lack of basic skills among many incoming students at UT-San Antonio. The day-to-day experiences of his wife, a special education and kindergarten teacher, added fuel to his school choice advocacy.

But what distinguishes Merrifield's contribution to the direction of the school choice debate has been his willingness to question enthusiastic school choice advocates about whether voucher experiments like the one in Milwaukee can really tell anyone anything about the marketplace and market forces, since those features are largely absent from the program.

That rigorous questioning of whether market features are present in most school choice experiments led Merrifield to Education Policy Institute Chairman Myron Lieberman, who encouraged him to write a book on the matter. In 2001, Merrifield published his first book, *The School Choice Wars* (Lanham, MD; Scarecrow Education Press), which Milton Friedman praised as an "important book" that was "passionate and persuasive."

Last year, Merrifield published the monograph, *School Choices: True and False* (Oakland, California: Independent Institute, 2002). He recently spoke with *School Reform News* Managing Editor George Clowes.

Clowes: *What would a market-based approach bring to public education?*

Merrifield: Genuine competition, not just minimal rivalry, and that is really the only true reform catalyst we have. The reason I can say that with some confidence is that we've tried everything else, more than once in most cases. Competition is what we need to bring about rapid rates of change. That's what the market is known for—the relentless pursuit of improvement, strong incentives, punishing mistakes, and rewarding success. We have very little of any of that today in education, but that's what we need and that's what the market delivers.

Clowes: *Isn't it a bad time to be promoting a market-based system, when WorldCom and Enron have raised concerns about fraudulent practices in the private sector? And some people say New Zealand's experiment with a full-blown educational marketplace didn't work.*

Merrifield: Well, markets don't turn people into saints, but markets punish people quickly when they do something wrong. In fact, WorldCom and Enron are good examples of how markets correct themselves: People stop buying the stock, they stop buying the product, and the crooks go broke, go to jail, or both. That is quite unlike a government operation that's found to be corrupt, where the system can persist for a long time.

There are two things about the New Zealand situation. First, there are a few problems, but the results aren't terrible. Second, there's nothing that resembles a market in New Zealand: 96.5 percent of the schools are owned by the government, which is more than here in the U.S. The government doesn't shut down schools that parents prefer less than others, and it doesn't copy and expand the ones that parents are oversubscribing. Also, there's no freedom of entry, which is a key feature of any competitive market.

Nothing that we associate with markets, other than the ability to have a choice, is happening in the New Zealand school system. If the New Zealand school system is an example of a market, then the Soviet Union was full of markets. You could shop at any state-run store you preferred, but we know it wasn't a market system.

If McDonald's is producing all the fast food, you can shop at any McDonald's you want but the Big Macs and the Quarter Pounders are all going to be pretty much the same no matter which store you go to. If you like Big Macs and Quarter Pounders, you're going to be well-served, but if you don't, you're going to be poorly served. That's

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the same problem we have in our education system now. It's like having a choice of different franchise outlets of the same provider.

Clowes: *What would a genuine market-based educational system look like?*

Merrifield: The two key things we need to have are non-discrimination and the freedom to set prices.

Non-discrimination means no longer discriminating against families that prefer schools not run by the government. To do that, the school system needs to become child-based: Whatever amount of government support a child is entitled to under the law should follow the child to the accredited school of their choice—whether that school happens to be owned and operated by the government, or a church, or a nonprofit organization, or a for-profit business.

You would take the government budget, deduct some money for administering a choice-based system, deduct some more money to pay off old remaining bonded indebtedness, and divide what is left by the number of children. You also might make it a little higher for students in high school and a little less for students in elementary school. Then everybody would be wearing the same price tag, and they would carry that cash, that voucher, or tax credit—whatever the delivery mechanism for the government money—to the school of their choice.

The second key element is that the providers must be able to choose the price they charge for their educational services. If that price is a little bit more than the voucher or tax credit—or however the public subsidy is delivered—then schools must be allowed to charge above and beyond that subsidy level. Many current systems, like those in Florida and Milwaukee, disallow such add-ons, and that's a devastating limitation.

People talk about how we can't afford voucher programs, but the current expenditures on education already are enough to send every child in America of school age to all but the very, very best private schools. What we need out of the school system that we're not getting now are incentives and specialization, and we can't have either of those without choice.

Clowes: *For schools to specialize in serving specific groups of students, they have to be able to set admission criteria. Don't lottery-based admissions and first-come, first-served admissions make it difficult to specialize?*

Merrifield: That's right. It's built into the legislation in places like Milwaukee, Cleveland, and Florida. That's a mistake.

I forgive it in part because we've had a history in our country of people choosing things and doing things because of the color of somebody's skin. But, first, we've come a long way from those kinds of attitudes; and, second, if the schools specialized, they would have many differences other than the composition of the student body that would affect parental choice.

In the current system, we have less diversity in school composition than we ever have had. If a parent is trying to choose where to live and which school their child is going to attend, the only difference in the schools, in many cases, is in the composition of the student body. All the rest—the curriculum, the books, and so on—is dictated by the government.

But if schools could specialize, then we'd have academic differences and pedagogical differences, and all kinds of other reasons to choose or not choose a school.

Clowes: *Almost all of the voucher programs in place right now are targeted to children in low-income families. Some people think that if the income restrictions were lifted, the rich would take all the seats in private schools and leave none for the poor.*

Merrifield: That's the "Static World Fallacy," the idea that there's a fixed supply out there. That goes against everything we know about economics.

If there's an increase in demand, the price will temporarily rise, entrepreneurs will flood in with new supply to meet that demand, and then the price will generally go down to where it was before, if not lower. That's why prices need to be allowed to be flexible: to drive that process and have the initial increase to attract the entrepreneurs, which then brings the prices back down.

"That's what the market is known for—the relentless pursuit of improvement, strong incentives, punishing mistakes, and rewarding success."

Existing programs are targeted to specific groups, but that's a mistake. It's not in anyone's interest to target freedom. It's least of all in the interests of low-income people to limit the increase in freedom or choice to themselves, because, if everybody has freedom, choice, and portability of the government money that supports them, the schools will get better faster, they'll specialize more, and they'll be more innovative.

Allowing the wealthy to use government money—their money, in fact—to provide their children with greater school choice doesn't hurt anybody. It also doesn't make anybody worse off to let people spend more money on education by allowing add-ons.

I feel confident that a $5,000 or $6,000 voucher or tax credit per child per year would entitle every child in America to a very, very high level of education. But if some want to spend $9,000 or $10,000 by adding a few thousand dollars more to their voucher, that doesn't harm anyone.

Clowes: *How do the different school choice options—vouchers, tax credits, charter schools, and so on—stack up in terms of their ability to deliver what you call the reform catalyst of competition?*

Merrifield: One of the things that privately funded vouchers lack, in addition to just sheer dollars per student, is the likely staying power entrepreneurs need to make investments. You just can't count on some philanthropist continually donating millions of dollars a year to private vouchers. An entrepreneur is not going to break ground on a new campus for that kind of money, given that it might evaporate in a few years.

Charter schools are a school choice option, but they're still government institutions. There's no provision for charging a price above the taxpayer amount, and they're limited in how much they can specialize. That's because they're not allowed to exclude customers. Part of the problem with charter schools is we keep wanting to pretend that every school should be capable of serving every child. We need to give up that notion. Human beings are too diverse for that to happen.

We need to have choices, we need to have specialization, and we need to have some schools say, "Look, we're specializing in special ed children, or children that like geography. Your child isn't one of those, so we can't admit him. But here's the name of a school that does what he likes. Take him there." It's far better to have a school system with an outstanding choice for everyone than to have a school system that pretends that every school is OK for everyone.

With tax credits, the problem in the past has been that they have been defined to be non-refundable. Most families don't have very sizable state and local tax liabilities to tap into, and so non-refundable credits cannot deliver very much money to provide incentives to entrepreneurs or to eliminate the discrimination problem.

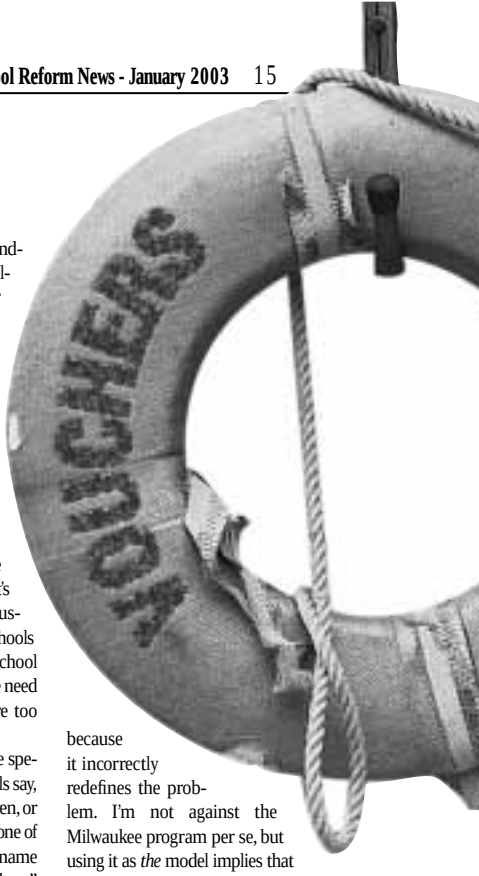
However, a refundable tax credit would provide incentives and eliminate the discrimination problem. A $5,000 per child tax credit, for example, would work like this: "OK, Mr. Jones. You sent two children to a private school for $5,000 each. Since you paid $1,000 in state income taxes, here's a $9,000 refund."

I think that's identical to a voucher. Voucher, tax credit—it's all the same to me. Either method of delivering equal treatment of all children, regardless of which school they use, is OK with me.

Clowes: *In developing legislative proposals for school choice programs, which model would you recommend legislators use as a basis to build on: Milwaukee, Cleveland, or Florida?*

Merrifield: I wish they'd use the original Friedman voucher proposal as their model. The programs you refer to are all just rescue programs, or escape hatches. They're all highly targeted and the funds that support the targeted individuals are less than if they attended a government institution. Even so, families are not allowed to supplement the voucher amount with their own funds if they'd like to spend a little bit more on schooling than the taxpayers are providing for them. I don't see any of the existing programs as models to copy.

When I hear legislators saying, "We ought to just do Milwaukee everywhere," that scares me, because it incorrectly redefines the problem. I'm not against the Milwaukee program per se, but using it as *the* model implies that we have mostly good schools and only a few bad ones. It implies that only a few children are getting a raw deal educationally and that we just need a little rescue program for them.



That's not the problem we have. We don't need school choice as a lifeboat; we need it as a reform catalyst. We have a low-performing educational system where some schools are better than others, but few are good. In the suburban districts, the schools are better, but not necessarily good. So when we talk about duplicating escape hatch programs, we're defining too limited a role for school choice in our reform efforts. That may put school choice in a rut it'll never get out of, because there's nothing harder to change than a government program.

Now, a lot of people say, "We got into this mess slowly; we should get out of it slowly." There are two problems with that. First, government programs aren't very changeable. And second, you can't incrementally shrink government. You can incrementally grow government—we've done that—but you can't incrementally shrink it. Every place where government has been scaled back, it's been done in a blitzkrieg, revolutionary fashion.

Clowes: *Wouldn't well-funded vouchers do that?*

Merrifield: Yes, vouchers would change the system's underlying elements dramatically, and that's what is needed. That would change the incentives overnight.

If we allowed the money that schools currently spend—more than $8,000 per student—to be child-based, that would produce an explosion of entrepreneurship, and there would be so many schools available they probably all would be about half-full. That kind of vast overcapacity is an unmistakable signal that the price is way too high, and so I suspect we wouldn't see any pressure to raise the level of per-pupil funding for a long time.

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INVALID continued from page 1

used to help all students in a school, even where the disadvantaged are a minority of the student body. The U.S. Department of Education (DoEd) backed the shift in a variety of ways, from funding the dissemination of the research to pushing schools and states to adopt schoolwide programs over traditional interventions.

There was only one problem. Subsequent independent investigations revealed that all the key research on schoolwide improvement—which was produced by the co-developers and associates of the leading schoolwide improvement model, Success for All—was not scientifically valid. The disadvantaged students in the supposedly successful schools were in reality performing far below grade level.

These findings have significant implications for federal reform efforts:

- First, it appears much of the $100 billion in federal and state reform funds was misdirected towards an intervention approach that provides no help to disadvantaged children; in fact, learning gaps nationally actually widened during the 1990s, despite major increases in reform funding.
- Second, in Title I schools, funds intended to help the disadvantaged disproportionally help advantaged students.
- Third, DoEd did not perform due diligence over the research it funded, the practices it validated, and the programs it advocated.

Responding to these concerns is critical, since the No Child Left Behind legislation mandates the use of scientifically validated practices, and a federal "What Works Clearinghouse" is being established to define such practices.

How could Congress and the whole education profession change course based on results from questionable research? The short answer is: The results were never independently verified. A small group of researchers with interrelated interests and potential conflicts of interest conducted and disseminated scientifically invalid research that seriously misdirected education reform efforts to help needy and disadvantaged children.

Here's how it happened.

"[I]t appears much of the $100 billion in federal and state reform funds was misdirected towards an intervention approach that provides no help to disadvantaged children ..."

Influential Studies

The original studies on schoolwide reform were done by Robert Slavin and Nancy Madden, who reported the success in Baltimore of the schoolwide Success for All program they had co-developed. This program is, according to its authors, "one of the greatest success stories of educational research and reform." Since Slavin is a highly regarded researcher and the studies were published in prestigious research journals, the studies had credibility. Then another researcher reported dramatic gains for Success for All schools in Memphis.

Although both districts ultimately dropped the program, those initial results of dramatic successes led Congress to consider changing the Title I law to favor the use of the schoolwide strategy. DoEd was asked to study the effectiveness of traditional versus schoolwide interventions. The study concluded schoolwide models were better and that Success for All was the best schoolwide model. The two researchers who conducted the DoEd study were in the center at Johns Hopkins University where Success for All had been developed; the wife of one of the researchers is an officer in the Success for All Foundation.

One of the two researchers from the DoEd study then headed another study commissioned by the five major national teacher and administrator professional organizations to determine which interventions were research-based. That study concluded there were only three research-based programs, and that the most validated was Success for All.

Slavin, co-developer of Success for All, also was co-director of a center at Johns Hopkins University, called the Center for Research on the Education of Students Placed At-Risk (CRESPAR), the sole national federally funded center for disseminating research about disadvantaged students. CRESPAR conducted another evaluation that concluded Success for All was the most research-validated of the schoolwide intervention programs.

Preponderance of Evidence

Convinced by the preponderance of evidence produced by this small group of researchers, Congress changed Title I to favor, though not mandate, the schoolwide approach. DoEd, however, promoted the schoolwide approach and discouraged using Title I funds for serving disadvantaged students directly.

By the late 1990s, virtually all of the discretionary new grants from DoEd and its Office of Educational Research and Improvement (OERI) went to researching, disseminating, and developing schoolwide reform models, with approximately one-third—roughly $62 million over a five-year period—going to the Johns Hopkins' centers where Success for All was developed and the Success for All Foundation.

Other organizations, including Edison Schools, adopted the Success for All program. The superintendent of Memphis was named Superintendent of the Year for the district's reported "gains" from the program, which were documented by a professor who had an interest in distribution of the program.

In the *Abbott* school finance ruling, the New Jersey Supreme Court mandated the program for the state's 277 high-poverty elementary schools, based solely on the advice of a University of Wisconsin professor who was a consultant to New American Schools, whose most prominent model was Success for All, according to *Forbes* magazine.

Unravelling Story

But the supposed research-based success story began to unravel when independent researchers examined the "success." When Richard Venezky of the University of Delaware looked at student records in Baltimore, he was "shocked and disappointed by how poorly the Success for All students had actually done." Projecting Venezky's data, after five years of Success for All, students reached the sixth grade reading the equivalent of 3 to 4 years below grade level.

Another independent analysis by the present author showed the Success for All schools in Memphis also had not gained in achievement as reported but had actually declined during 1998-99. More than half of them—some 24 schools—were ranked among the lowest 77 in reading in the state. When district staff confirmed the lack of progress in Success for All and other schoolwide schools, the new superintendent threw out all schoolwide reform programs.

"Additional independent research studies continued to surface, now involving more than 250 Success for All schools, showing the program to be ineffective and/or less effective than the districts' own initiatives."

Ineffective, but Still Funded

Additional independent research studies continued to surface, now involving more than 250 Success for All schools, showing the program to be ineffective and/or less effective than the districts' own initiatives. An evaluation of the comprehensive schoolwide strategy by the RAND Corporation also found no effects. An analysis by the present author showed how the methodology demonstrating the apparent success of the schoolwide program was scientifically invalid.

In spite of these findings, DoEd re-funded CRESPAR without competition and has provided Slavin with another multi-million dollar grant to carry out a further self-evaluation of his program. As a result, the same scientifically invalid research continues to be disseminated at taxpayer expense as evidence of "success." For example, a November 10, 2002 article in *The New York Times Sunday Magazine* discussed a new study by a University of Wisconsin professor who once again concluded Success for All was one of only three research-validated intervention programs.

This latest study was funded by CRESPAR, and the author was until recently an employee of CRESPAR. In addition, the researcher from two of the studies referred to earlier was just made project director for the new Federal "What Works Clearinghouse."

Dr. Stanley Pogrow is a professor of education at the University of Arizona, where he specializes in school reform and improvement policy and practice. He is the developer of the HOTS (Higher Order Thinking Skills) program for Title I and LD students, and the pre-Algebra Supermath curriculum. His email address is stanpogrow@worldnet.att.net.

Due Diligence Needed at DoEd

The misdirection of reform efforts with schoolwide intervention programs raises some serious concerns:

- It calls into question the validity of all federally funded and disseminated research about how to help disadvantaged students during the 1990s.
- It points to severe shortcomings in how the U.S. Department of Education (DoEd) awards R & D and dissemination grants.
- It casts doubt on the ability of DoEd to exercise proper due diligence over ongoing efforts to use research to validate effective practices.
- It calls into question the changes made in Title I and the overall approach to school reform.

For more information...

WWW See Stanley Pogrow, "Success for All Does Not Produce Success for Students," *Phi Delta Kappan*, September 2000, pages 67-80; available on the Internet at **http://www.alt-sfa.com/pogrow_kappan2.html**.

Debra Viadero, "Whole-School Projects Show Mixed Results," *Education Week*, November 7, 2001; available on the Internet at **http://www.edweek.org/ew/ew_printstory.cfm?slug=10memphis.h21**.

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Questions Concerning School Vouchers

Not a panacea, but not a poison, either

BY LYNN HARSH

QUESTION: *Would education vouchers solve all of America's education problems?*

ANSWER: No, but we can't "fix" education until we "fix" who makes the decisions about education. The people who make the decisions are those who control the money.

Vouchers move us toward marketplace competition and the right of individuals to make choices for themselves and their families. The freedom to enter and exit particular schools must become a right of education consumers, and creating options for students must become a right of educators and entrepreneurs, before schools will begin to reform themselves into more effective institutions of learning.

QUESTION: *Would vouchers be a boon for private schools?*

ANSWER: Not necessarily. In a competitive education marketplace, vouchers would cover only the cost of delivering a quality education to students. There would be no windfall profits. Voucher programs operating today in Milwaukee and Cleveland cover less than the amount spent by typical private schools.

Many private schools, particularly non-religious institutions, would quickly accept the vouchers. But vouchers would pose serious dilemmas for others. Admitting students with vouchers means accepting money with strings—strings that have some consequence to particular private institutions. The first "string" would likely be student testing, the second would be an open enrollment requirement.

QUESTION: *Would vouchers undermine religious private schools?*

ANSWER: Religious schools are allowed to accept vouchers in Milwaukee and Cleveland and they have not been forced to abandon the religious elements of their curriculum. Of course, curriculum is not the only concern; other key elements of private schooling may be affected by vouchers. That is why it is important that voucher programs be designed differently from city to city and state to state. There is no single right voucher program, just as there is no single right answer to the question.

Some schools would probably accept public money even if it requires that they compromise their religious or academic standards. That is their choice to make. The parties responsible for balancing government requirements for vouchers against a private school's mission are the school's governing board and the school's patrons.

It is not government's job to keep private institutions from making unwise decisions or to protect them from competition. We have far too much of that "nanny nonsense" now. Should we allow government to continue running an education monopoly because some private schools will make what we consider to be bad decisions?

COMMENT: *Don't vouchers mean government control of private schools? Doesn't this mean, in the end, nobody will really have free-market choices?*

RESPONSE: History does not favor this prediction. Government schools replaced private schools during the nineteenth century by claiming a monopoly on public funding, not by tempting private schools with public funding and then controlling them. The way to restore private schools is to break the government school monopoly on public funding with vouchers.

When the free market has been allowed to operate in other fields, choices spring up all over, often in unusual and unexpected places. Highly motivated people in a free society find ways to meet their needs and the needs of others—even when that means bucking government and the status quo. Vouchers will inspire the same variety of options in education.

QUESTION: *Vouchers would leave in place a system of coercive taxation to fund schools, right?*

ANSWER: Yes. But that problem is worse today, when the education decision-makers take our money and then are nearly unreachable and untouchable. It is less of a problem as we move closer toward putting consumers in the driver's seat.

For the "public good," this nation mandates education for all children, collects taxes from most every citizen, and enforces the mandate through the pwoer of law. As long as this is the case, parents and children affected by the law must have genuine choices.

QUESTION: *Why don't we just separate the state and school altogether?*

ANSWER: Except for deeding property to communities so they could build schoolhouses, our forebears did not envision government getting involved in the education of children. But here we are, and the question is, where do we go from here?

Many people believe children will turn into uneducated delinquents if government doesn't assume the responsibility to educate them. They won't support complete separation of school and state. We recognize this is an elitist attitude, but they do not. Now that civil rights legislation protects equal opportunity, it seems to me we have little to worry about if the private sector assumes more responsibility for educating children.

QUESTION: *How can you expect parents to make wise choices about the schools their child attend when most of them don't even care enough to show up for parent-teacher conferences?*

ANSWER: The high quality and relatively low prices I pay for food are the results of a small percentage of consumers who take the time to be aggressive price shoppers. Grocery stores operate on a small profit margin and cannot afford to lose even 5 percent of their business, so they compete vigorously to provide what their shoppers want. The majority of us, therefore, benefit from the wise choices made by a very small number of people.

Likewise, schools cannot afford to lose even a small percentage of their revenue base. If the money follows the child to the school chosen by his or her parents, and leaves at the same time the child does, the school will respond to deficiencies immediately. This means many children will benefit from the active and conscientious involvement of a relatively small number of parents.

QUESTION: *Don't vouchers violate the separation of church and state guaranteed by the First Amendment?*

ANSWER: What constitution are you reading? The First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution says "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof...." Government is not establishing religion when it gives money to parents. It is the parent who will make the decision as to whether the voucher will be used in a religious institution.

"When the free market has been allowed to operate, choices spring up all over, often in unexpected and unusual places."

The current system of financing schools, not vouchers, violates the First Amendment. Many parents are denied an opportunity to freely exercise their religion because, while the law (and their own conscience) tells them they must educate their children, government schools are prohibited from teaching religion, and many heavily taxed families do not have the economic wherewithal to enroll their children in private schools that conform to their religious beliefs.

Former high school teacher and principal Lynn Harsh is executive director of the Evergreen Freedom Foundation in Olympia, Washington, whose Web site is http://www.effwa.org. *Her e-mail address is* effwa@effwa.org.

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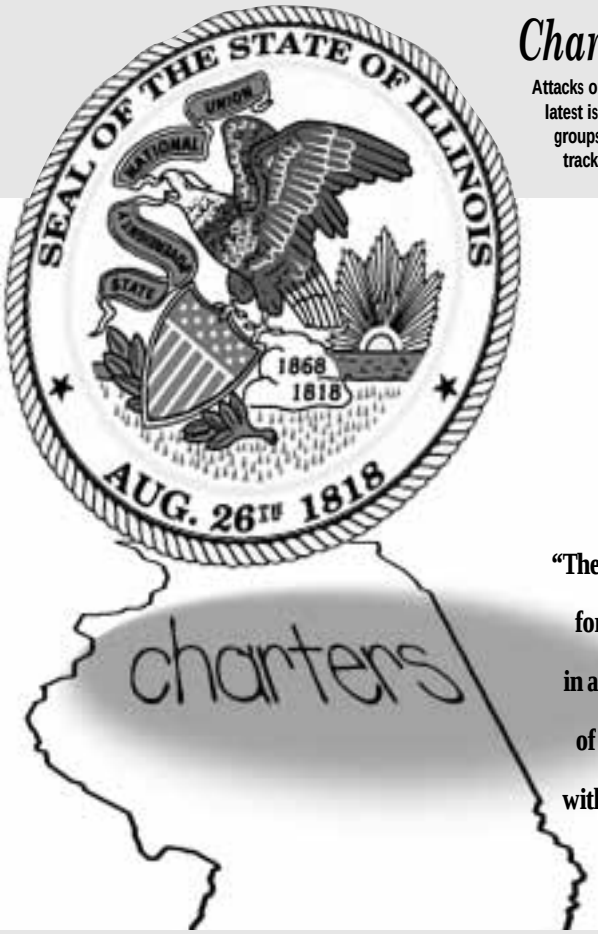
Charter School Setbacks in Illinois

Attacks on the continuing growth of charter schools come from three directions, according to Bruno V. Manno in the latest issue of *Education Next*: state policymakers, local school systems, and organized public education interest groups. Recent events in Illinois provide examples of such attacks and illustrate just how effective they can be in sidetracking charter school reform.



Appeal Nullification Allows School Board to Kill Top Charter

BY PAUL SEIBERT

After only two years' operation under the direction of Governors State University, Governors State Charter School was considered one of the best in Illinois. But last June, the Crete-Monee School District, the school's sponsor, voted to revoke the school's charter, citing the school as deficient in meeting some of its proposed five-year goals.

"The state's hostile environment for charter schools left Illinois in a unique position at the start of the 2002-2003 school year--with one fewer charter than the state had a year earlier ..."

Though a state appeal panel confirmed only four minor deficiencies, an assistant state superintendent not only declared the charter revoked but also then failed to refer the decision to the State Board of Education, thus rendering the state's charter school appeal process null and void.

The appeal process for charter schools in Illinois is only four years old, created by legislators in 1998 to enhance the effectiveness of the state's original 1996 charter school law, which permitted only one sponsoring agency: the local school district. The 1998 legislation permitted applicants to appeal a local board denial to the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE), which would then convene a review panel to make a recommendation to the state superintendent to pass back to the ISBE. If the ISBE reversed the local decision, the ISBE would then act as the sponsor for the proposed charter school.

Although the State Board approved two suburban charter schools immediately after the law was changed, it has approved no additional schools out of the numerous appeals it has received. In fact, only one school besides Governors State—the Rockford YouthBuild Charter School proposal—has made it through the appeals panel. But the State Board acted against its superintendent's recommendation and denied the YouthBuild charter, with Board members citing their lack of faith in charter schools in general and their reluctance to overturn local decisions.

That view contradicts the purpose for which the appeals process was enacted and effectively nullifies the charter school appeal law.

In the past year, Illinois has approved only one new charter school, the Tomorrow's Builders Charter School in East St. Louis. The state's hostile environment for charter schools left Illinois in a unique position at the start of the 2002-2003 school year—with one fewer charter than the state had a year earlier, 22 versus 23, and one fewer charter school site, 27 versus 28.

Paul Seibert is director of Charter Consultants, Inc., a division of The Governor French Academy, Inc., of Belleville, Illinois. His email address is seib@gfacademy.com.

Rockford Paradox

When Rockford Public Schools in Illinois denied the YouthBuild Charter School proposal, it argued the district needed no such program of choice, and also that it would be unable to absorb the budgetary impact of the proposed school—estimated to be less than 1/10th of 1 percent of the district's budget. Since denying the charter, the district has applied for and received a grant from the public school choice program, and it has announced a $7.5 million surplus.

Chicago Teachers Union Aims for Charter School Restrictions

BY PAUL SEIBERT

The Chicago Teachers Union (CTU) lost bargaining powers as part of 1996 legislation giving the mayor of Chicago control of the city's public schools. But a bill (Senate Bill 1240) that came close to being approved during the "lame-duck" session of the Illinois legislature last December would have restored limited bargaining powers to the union. The bill also would have lifted the cap on charter schools in Chicago from 15 to 30, but at the price of four other amendments imposing severe restrictions on charter school operations.

The legislation had won strong support not only from the CTU and most Chicago labor unions but also business groups and Mayor Daley. While the ban on strikes would have continued, CTU bargaining rights over schedules, staffing, layoffs, student assessment, and class sizes would have been restored. But retiring Senate President James "Pate" Philip refused to allow a vote on the bill, saying it "waters down school reform."

The bill's promise to lift the charter cap was welcomed by charter supporters, since the existing 15 charters in Chicago have all been granted and additional proposals for schools have been waiting for an opportunity to apply. Also, there are some 4,000 children on Chicago charter school waiting lists.

Although raising the cap is not something the Chicago Teachers Union would normally favor, the other amendments were concessions to the union view that charter schools are institutions in need of regulation and restriction. The union influence was most obvious in the amendment requiring existing charter schools in Chicago to employ at least 75 percent conventionally certified teachers, with new charters required to employ at least 50 percent conventionally certified teachers. Currently, charter schools have no teacher certification requirements.

The most restrictive amendment proposed in the bill would have limited new Chicago charter schools to a single campus. That would have halted one of the most promising innovations spawned under the current charter school law.

Another amendment would have imposed a 30-month moratorium on Chicago charter schools engaging the services of for-profit management companies. By law, Illinois charter schools must be operated by not-for-profit organizations but, like conventional public schools, they may contract with for-profit and other not-for-profit corporations for goods and services. Senate Bill 1240 would have restricted that right.

Finally, Chicago charter schools would have been required to annually administer any other nationally recognized standardized tests administered by the Chicago Public Schools. Charter schools are already required to annually administer the state's own standardized achievement tests.

Although the bill will die if Philip continues to deny a vote during the last two days of the legislative session, January 6 and 7, the legislation will almost certainly be reintroduced as soon as the new General Assembly convenes.

Paul Seibert is director of Charter Consultants, Inc., a division of The Governor French Academy, Inc., of Belleville, Illinois. His email address is seib@gfacademy.com.

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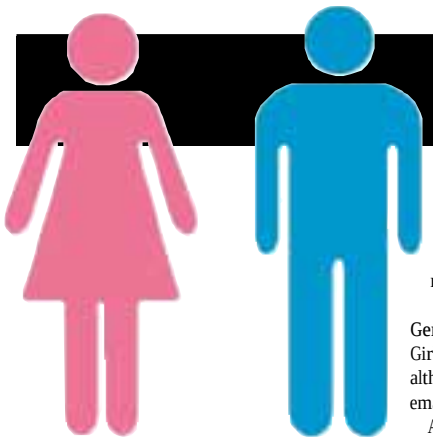


JUST THE FACTS: Test Scores by Gender and Other Characteristics

BY GEORGE A. CLOWES

Since 1969, the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) has periodically conducted assessments to provide a report card on what the nation's students know and can do in various subject areas, and how these achievement levels are changing over time.

As well as reporting achievement trends by subject by age and grade level, the NAEP also reports by different groupings of students, such as male compared to female, white compared to black, etc.

In 2000, NAEP published *Trends in Academic Progress: Three Decades of Student Performance*, a summary of the trends through 1999 in reading, mathematics, and science for students at ages 9, 13, and 17. Since reading is fundamental to all education and the reading skills of 17-year-olds represent the cumulative effect of 11 years of schooling, comparisons here will be limited to reading scores for 17-year-olds.

Gender and Ethnic Group

Girls consistently outscore boys in reading, although the situation is reversed in mathematics and science.

Although the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) does not report the breakdown of students by sex by grade level, data from the *2001 Digest of Education Statistics* shows female high school graduates have outnumbered males in all but four of the last 30 years. For example, 1.51 million girls, and only 1.25 million boys, completed high school in 2000.

Although white students still outscore black and Hispanic students in the NAEP long-term reading test, the latter groups' dramatic gains in the 1980s almost halved the gap. However, the 1990s saw no further narrowing of the gap.

TV and Reading Materials

The NAEP reading scores suggest two things parents can do to help their children do better in school: Cut television viewing to less than two hours a day and have plenty of reading materials around the house. Students who watch less than two hours of televison a day consistently score above the average in the long-term NAEP reading test, as do children who live in homes where newspapers, magazines, books, and an encyclopedia are available.

Parent Education

The NAEP reading data also suggest that when parents earn their own high school diploma and pursue further education after high school, these accomplishments help their children outscore the average in the long-term NAEP reading test. However, parents' high school diplomas in 1999 apparently don't confer the same benefits to their offspring as high school diplomas did in 1971.

Divorce

Children of divorced families not only had lower test scores than children from intact families, but this gap widened over time, according to a new national study from Ohio State University. Another study found that adults exposed to unilateral divorce as children are less well educated and have lower family incomes.

George A. Clowes is managing editor of School Reform News.

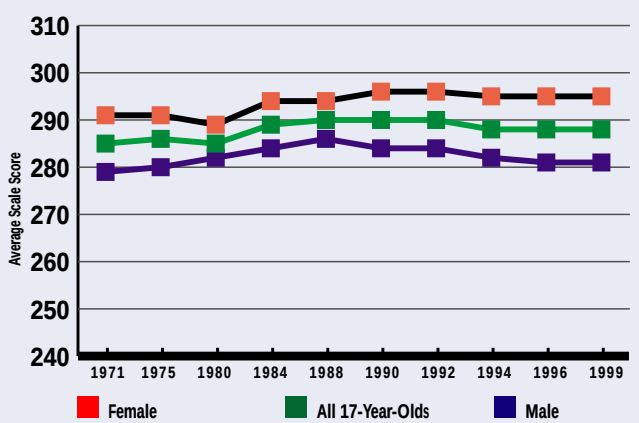
For more information...

WWW The National Assessment of Educational Progress's report, *Trends in Academic Progress: Three Decades of Student Performance*, is available at the Web site of the National Center for Education Statistics at **http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/pdf/main1999/2000469.pdf**. Detailed data are available for downloading at **http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/tables/data/ltt1999/NTR31012.CSV**.

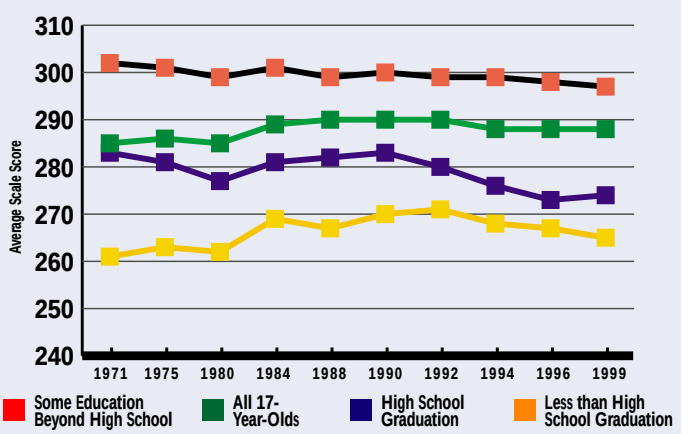
Data on high school completion by sex is available in Table 185 of the *2001 Digest of Education Statistics*, available from the National Center for Education Statistics at **http://nces.ed.gov/pubs2002/digest2001/tables/PDF/table185.pdf.**

The cited research on divorce and educational attainment is available from the National Bureau of Economic Research at **ttp://papers.nber.org/papers/W7968** and from Ohio State University at **http://www.acs.ohio-state.edu/researchnews/ archive/childdiv.htm**.

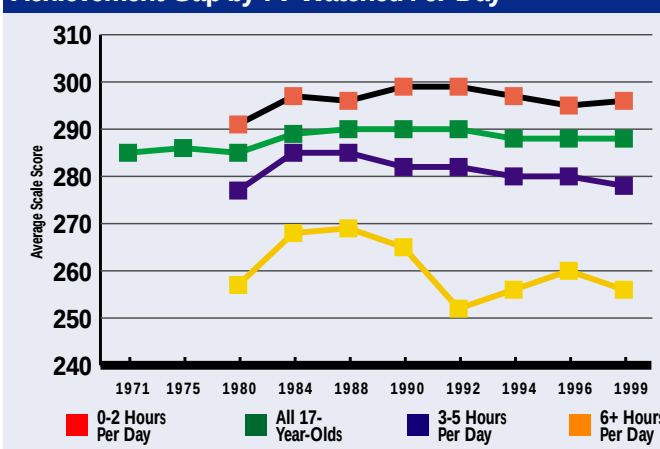
Achievment Gap by Gender*



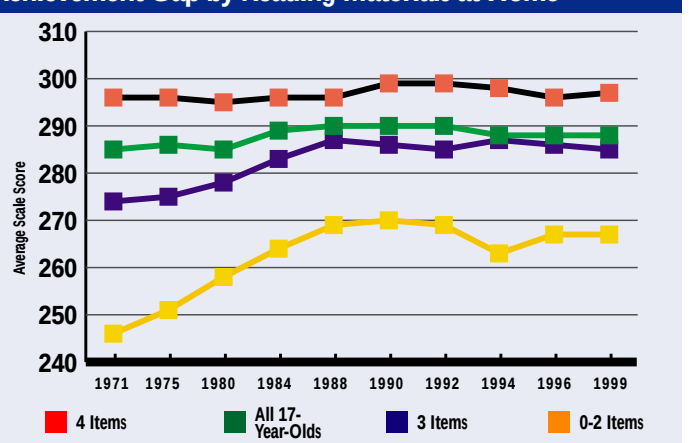
Achievement Gap by Parents' Education*



Achievement Gap by TV Watched Per Day*



Achievement Gap by Reading Materials at Home*



*NAEP Long-Term Reading Trend for 17-Year-Olds

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